

Lamentations 5:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!

Analysis

Personal responsibility acknowledged: "The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!" (naflah ateret roshenu oi-na lanu ki chatanu, נַפְלָה אֶתֶּרֶת רָאשֵׁנוּ אָנוּ לֹא כִּי קָבָרָנוּ). The "crown" (ateret, רָאשֵׁת) symbolizes glory, honor, dignity—all that Israel possessed as God's chosen people. Its fall represents complete loss of status. Deuteronomy 28:13 promised: "the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail." But covenant breaking reversed this. The "woe unto us" (oi-na lanu, אָנוּ לֹא) is a cry of anguish and self-reproach. Critically, the verse ends with confession: "that we have sinned" (ki chatanu, כִּי קָבָרָנוּ). After complaining about fathers' sins (verse 7), the generation finally owns their guilt. This movement from blame-shifting to confession is essential for restoration. As long as people excuse themselves, repentance remains incomplete. When they acknowledge "we have sinned," the path to mercy opens (1 John 1:9, Proverbs 28:13).

Historical Context

The crown imagery had both literal and metaphorical application. Literally, King Zedekiah's crown was removed when Nebuchadnezzar captured him, executed his sons, blinded him, and took him to Babylon (2 Kings 25:6-7). Ezekiel 21:25-27 pronounces: "Remove the diadem, and take off the crown...I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." The crown wouldn't be restored until Messiah comes. Metaphorically, Israel's crown was their unique status as God's treasured

possession (Exodus 19:5-6, Deuteronomy 7:6). Exile stripped this visible distinction. Among the nations, they appeared as just another defeated people. The confession "we have sinned" echoes throughout Scripture as prerequisite for restoration: David (Psalm 51:4), Israel (Numbers 14:40, 21:7), Daniel (Daniel 9:5, 15), prodigal son (Luke 15:18, 21). Ownership of sin breaks through denial and enables receiving forgiveness.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What 'crown'—status, reputation, blessing, or privilege—have we lost through sin, and how does honest confession open the way to restoration?
2. How does the movement from blaming others (verse 7: 'our fathers sinned') to owning guilt (verse 16: 'we have sinned') model genuine repentance?
3. In what ways does Christ restore the crown of glory and honor that sin caused to fall (1 Peter 5:4, Revelation 2:10)?

Interlinear Text

is fallen	The crown	from our head	woe	H4994	H0	H3588
H5307	H5850	H7218	H188			

בְּנֵינוּ

unto us that we have sinned

H2398

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 89:39 (Parallel theme): Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground.

Job 19:9 (Parallel theme): He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head.

Jeremiah 13:18 (Parallel theme): Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down: for your principalities shall come down, even the crown of your glory.

Lamentations 1:1 (Parallel theme): How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!

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